The Religion of the Kuvi-Konds,

THEIR CUSTOMS

AND

FOLK-LORE



FROM ORIGINAL SOURCES,

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PREFACE.

This publication consists of three parts—

1st.—The Religion of the Konds.

2nd.—Their Customs.

3rd.—Their Folk-lore.

It has been compiled with the object of creating feelings of interest and sympathy in the minds of those who have to come into touch with this simple and interesting race of people, be they Government servants or others unconnected with that service.

The whole contents of this little book is original and not compiled or taken from any other book. Everything was related to me in the fine Kuvi or Kond language.

These Konds, as will be seen by a perusal of this work, retain the old patriarchal form of government, their religion, like the old Grecian and Roman theocracies invests the forests, streams and lakes with ruling deities, while Paramushesa takes the place of Jupiter. Beside this, there appears also a great difference between Roman and Grecian theocraties, whilst here Jupiter has a great swarm of deities round him, who all take some place in his relationship, similar to the Vedic deitie. There is in the Kond religion only one God. He is the father, the creator of the world, he is good and wise, helping the poor and punishing the wicked. He himself told his people to worship evil spirits, that they may not harm them. So the evil spirits worship has been introduced

by Paramushesa himself. Stories concerning Paramushesa in the Folk-lore throw a bright light upon this character. Some of them are very touching, some of a real philosophical character. To understand the religion of these Konds, it is absolutely necessary to read their Folk-lore, in connection with the first part of this book.

The ignorance and simplicity of this race is hard to comprehend. One small instance will serve to illustrate this. Once, on a certain day, when many of these Konds were standing in my office and I had to open my cash chest repeatedly, to meet a number of different payments, these Konds formed a group of interested spectators. They watched me, as I opened the chest, and putting my hand in extracted from the bag the exact number of rupees I required for each payment. After much deliberation and argument, as to how and whence this constant flow of silver rupees came, they decided that the chest possessed independent generating power of its own. "The "mother rupee" is hidden in there which brings forth all these rupees," they said. This supports the story in Folk-lore of the Oilseller who attributed generating power to the beam of his house.

If the publication of this little book succeeds in the object for which it was written, the Author will feel amply repaid for the trouble that he has had to overcome in its compilation, as he received all his information by personal association with these Konds.

SALURU, }
11th March 1912. }

F. V. P. SCHULZE.

PART I.

THE RELIGION OF THE KUVI-KONDS.

THE RELIGION OF THE KONDS.

The Kond believes in the existence of one good God and many evil spirits. The name of the good God is Paramushola or Paramushesa or Paramusheasi. Dharmu is another name of God, but this name is spoken with reference to the Sun, and cannot be used by a Christian Kond in his prayer.

Paramushela is the Creator of the whole universe. He loves his creation, but seems to be too weak to extricate his helpless people out of the power of evil spirits. There exist still many prayers directed to God the Creator. The address to God consists in the following words: "O Paramushela, Dada, Dhormu, Kadigoi, and Gundukuttoni." All these are names of the one great God and some stars to whom and to which Konds supplicate when they are in distress.

When the earth became more and more populated, sin also increased to such an extent that Paramushesa could not bear it any longer, wherefore he determined to destroy them all and sent a great flood over the whole earth.

After the flood was over and the earth was dry again, Paramushela wished to know, if any living being still existed to repopulate the earth. He therefore sent crow with the order to find out if any one was still alive.

The crow flew over the whole earth but could not find anybody. At last it saw some leaf plates which people appeared to have lately used for their meals. The crow took these leaves and showed them to Paramushela.

Then he sent a woodpecker to find out the whereabouts of the people who had eaten from those leaf plates. He supposed that they had hidden themselves in a hollow tree. The woodpecker flew to the place where the leaves had been found and began to listen quietly round all the trees. At last it came to a big tree. From inside it heard the voices of two people talking together. Rejoiced that it had found out their hiding place, it quickly flew back to Paramushela and reported the matter.

Some servants were now sent out to fetch those men before God. Two people were found in the hole, a brother and his sister, who had lived together in this hollow tree since the great flood. On their appearing before God they were asked by Him three times who they were, and three times they replied that they were brother and sister. At first Paramushela was puzzled how to act, as their consanguinity precluded their marriage and the repopulation of the world again.

After deliberation God infected both with small-pox, and when their features were so distorted as to be unrecognizable by each other, he married the two to each other and by them the whole earth was repopulated.

Another version of the same legend states that the two were saved from being drowned in the flood by finding safety in a pot in which they were subsequently discovered.

After the Deluge all men lived together as brethren; no caste existed.

After some time, however, when people began again to sin, Paramushela changed their languages and created the different castes, " that people might learn to obey."

Another version states that the first man and woman had five children, who were always quarrelling, so God gave each a different language which stopped all future disputes.

The Konds say that castes are as varied as the trees in a forest.

When, after some time, men became more gregarious in their habits, they had much to suffer from evil spirits.

The collective name of these spirits is Pēnu, (plural Pōnka). These pōnka have a variety of names, such as Gangapenu, Sonnolipenu, Zakiripenu, Horupenu, Bāālipenu.

They, therefore, appeared before Paramushela and asked his assistance against their enemies, these evil spirits, whereupon God issued the following instructions and order:

You shall live in future upon and between these hills, cultivating the land, and although you are living amongst tigers, bears and leopards, they shall do you no harm, if you observe the following order:

You shall on stated occasions offer sacrifices, a cow, pig or fowl, to which must be added an offering of cereals and fruits whenever you receive a good harvest of grain or fruits.

In each Kond village there are usually three little temples for these Ponka. The worship of each of them is different. There are four classes of priests distinguishable for one another. The Bedsani, the Sisa, the Dihera and the Tromba. The Bedsani, mostly two, are priestesses and their duty is to sing: the three others

are priests. The Sisa offers incense, while the Tromba beats the drum. The Dihera is the astrologer.

The Kond has no person or committee which exercises jurisdiction in caste matters over all or even over a particular district. Each village has its own Naidu or Hauta who is reverenced as their father. He is not appointed by the villagers; but from time immemorial the family of the Hauta has inherited this position. When the Hauta has no children his brother or his children will become Hautas of that village.

Each Hauta has as his assessors, the Tromba, the Sisa, the Dihera, the Bariki and the Salana or Dandasi. The Tromba is the village priest; the Sisa is the village musician; the Dihera, the village astrologer; and the Bariki and Salana are the village servants. This committee of six persons exercises jurisdiction over all offences against morality or caste regulations. When a man is expelled from his caste in one village, the sentence is communicated to the members of other villages who accept the ruling.

The village Hauta, as the head of the village, rules it together with his five abovenamed assessors in quite a patriarchal form of government. He deals with all classes of offences, be they of a public or private character. This can best be explained by illustrations.

Offence against Caste reduction.

If a man is charged with having committed an offence against his caste rules, he is brought before the village Hauta and he exhorts him to speak the truth.

If he denies the charge, the Hauta asks him to swear the following oath :—

I swear before these twelve collected men in this holy place that I have done no wrong, and to prove it, I pass my hand over the head of my accusor. May my strength be reduced in proportion to the number of hairs that fall from his head.

After this oath is exacted from him, the Hauta declares before the whole assembly that this man is free to go where he wishes and that no fault is found in him, declaring " as fire burns the wood to which the fire is applied, so may the man suffer harm by whom sin is wrongfully attributed.''

Then the Hauta turns round to the accuser and says, " You have brought false evidence against the accused, therefore you are liable to pay all the costs which the accused would have had to pay had he been found guilty."

There is no help for it. The accusor has to pay for a big dinner which costs about Rs. 5. At the dinner the accuser calls for the accused and says " consent to partake of my meal ; but if you are guilty, this meal which you take will prove injurious to your life," meaning thereby that some calamity will overtake him, a tiger may devour him, or a serpent may bite him or thieves may rob him or he may be attacked by some dangerous illness.

Then the accused again strongly protests that he is not at all guilty and is not afraid to partake of the meal and does so. After this is over the Hauta waits for a month to see if any harm befals the accused.

If nothing happens during the month, a new meeting is called and the accuser is again punished by having to stand the expenses of a second costly dinner. If, however, some calamity does overtake the accused within the given period, he is at once declared to be guilty and a heavy fine is inflicted upon him. He then confesses his fault and asks to be re-admitted to all his caste privileges, whereupon he is ordered to produce one rupee's worth of arrack, a rupee's worth of rice and about two or three rupees in ready cash. Then the whole village is invited to a big dinner. Before they begin to eat together, the Hauta takes a little gold ring which he heats and with it burns the tongue of the accused twice.

He then lifts the hand of the accused which is filled with the now cooked Zohorba rice to his forehead, uttering the words Zohorba, Zohorba, and turning to the assembly pronounces that this man is forgiven and re-admitted to all caste privilege and that no objection shall be raised by any one. Then he begins to eat the rice and all the others follow his example.

If an out-caste runs away and joins another village, unknown to his former village people, those villagers not knowing of his offence admit him into their society, but when the matter becomes known, they force him to pay the fine inflicted upon him. If the accused obeys he is admitted, and if he return to his own village, the proceedings of the 2nd village are recognized and a second fine is not again demanded. The sentence passed by the Hauta upon all out-castes is as follows :—As you do not obey and esteem us as your relatives, and me as your father while we regard you as such, none of us from this day shall enter your house, none will give you fire,

nor are you permitted to draw water from the well we use.

Offence against Morality.—A villager may (1) disobey the order of the Hauta, (2) He may be guilty of some offence against the public, (3) He may have committed an offence of a purely private nature. If he is found guilty and does not obey his Hauta, this sentence is pronounced against him. "You scorn and despise me today, in like manner I despise you. From this day a stain rests upon me and the same stain shall also rest upon you. Whenever any one who bearing your family name gets into any trouble, neither you nor your family shall have share in the meal which the accused has to pay. If the accused obeys the order of the Hauta and pays the fine which is inflicted upon him, which may be anything from four annas up to Rs. 100. (Let us take as an example an ordinary fine of Rs. 5), he brings some arrack, rice, an old cow and two pieces of money. A big dinner is given again to the whole village and all have to partake of it. The Hauta receives as his share one ear with a big piece of meat and one of the coins. The other coin the Hauta offers to the accused saying, "You have committed wrong, however we forgive you. Accept thy portion." In addition to this the Hauta presents him with a four anna piece.

After this all the village people dine together. At this time the Hauta divides his big share among those who rendered him their help, and the remainder between those who helped him in cooking and bringing firewood, and so forth. No one should presume that the Hauta has received the largest portion of meat. He takes only a comparatively small portion of it.

The accused has a right to appeal to any other Hauta. The two Hautas rehear the case and pronounce their decision. This verdict is conclusive. As all the inhabitants of a village live close together, all rumours of offences easily reach the ears of the Hauta who at once summons the accused and enquires into the case. The way usually adopted of bringing the complaint to the notice of the Hauta, is to talk over the matter first with the village Bariki, who is paid two annas, and thereupon carries the case before the Hauta. The Konds also recognize the ordeal as a test of guilt or innocence. A Kond, who is accused of a crime, if he denies having committed it, is asked to prove his innocence by an ordeal. Standing before a pot of boiling oil, the accused swears that he has not committed the offence and dips his hand into the boiling oil. If the hand suffers, as suffer it must, the guilt of the accused is established.

Gangapenu.

On a certain Wednesday the inhabitants of a village go to the temple of Gangapenu. There they kill a fowl. By the side of the temple is a small platter made of twisted bamboos. The priest takes some earth and some of the blood of the fowl and places them on the bamboo platter, which is decorated with flowers and painted with saffron. The priest begins by lifting up the dish, but, as it seems too light, he again adds some more earth to it, when it appears sufficiently heavy, he places it upon his head. All the people singing and beating the drum and making much noise follow him as he carries it to his house. After they reach the village, the dish is put on

the ground, the priest goes in to his house and brings out an earthen pot that was used the previous year.

This pot is painted again with saffron, oil and rice. Then the earth in the bamboo platter is put into the pot and is covered over and a light fixed upon it.

Now the pot is taken again into the priest's house, a corner of which is newly washed with cowdung and painted afresh with saffron.

A kuncham (three seers) of rice is poured over the place and the pot is put upon it.

The next day all the bearers complain that their legs ache owing to the heaviness of the pot. This complaint is however groundless. The following day the priest comes round the village with the pot upon his head, the second priest opens the cover, then the villagers put cooked rice, potatoes and vegetables, &c., into it, while others put uncooked rice in another dish, which is being carried by another. This is repeated every successive day for about sixteen days. The bearers and Trombas eat the cooked rice. On the sixteenth day all the village people go to the temple. There they offer some rice and saffron to Gangapenu. The Naidu of the village has to offer a sheep. The blood of all these animals belongs to Gangapenu, the heads to the priests, and the remainder to the public, who share it amongst themselves.

When this ceremony is over the pot is taken to the nearest river or tank and is again washed. It is then taken to the house of the priest and is kept in its old place to serve the same purpose the following year.

The feast is held in the end of September or in the beginning of October at the time of Dipala Amawasia.

Sonnolipenu.

On the first day all the grown up girls go to the little temple of Sonnolipenu, clean the same, washing it with fresh cowdung and making the prescribed signs in chunam.

After this they all go back to their village and inform the Bezani that everything is ready.

The two Bezanis take a bamboo basket from house to house asking for food. Each house has to give some flowers and rice.

The Sisa and Tromba also follow. Each woman in the house takes some water and pours it upon the feet of the priest and puts a bottu (spot) of rice and saffron on the forehead of the priest and even on the baskets and drums.

After this the priest does the same to the woman of the house.

When in the morning of the day the grown up girls decorate the little temple, other visitors and children, in the meantime, engage themselves in building a little hut in the middle of the village. Subsequently rice and flowers are received. The two Bezanis go into the little hut and begin to sing and pray. As the song and prayer gradually become more and more excitedly repeating, the other people round the hut say that the Penu has taken possession of them.

Then the Bezani comes out of the house and begins to sing a hymn in which the villagers join. Then suddenly the Bezani ceases and all cease with her. Then she commences a hymn in which all the villagers

at once join. In this way they all follow their Bezanis out of the village crying and singing. Each of them carries a fowl or a goat or some pigeons into the little hut temple. The pigeons are presented to the Horupenu (the hill spirit) which comes to this feast.

Now begins the service in or before the little hut. A small light is placed before it and rice is poured around then a goat and several fowls are slain. The heads of all the fowls are cooked in front of the hut and every one quits the place. The attendants receive a small fraction of it. The Bezani suddenly rises, takes the plate with rice with a light over her head and proceeds back to the village singing. All people follow her.

The Bezani carries the rice and light into the small hut in the middle of the village, and when she reappears outside all the people begin to sing without ceasing, and dancing during the whole night. This is repeated during seven successive nights. On the eighth day all the villagers prepare a pot full of small cakes. When the Bezani makes her round again through the village, each house has to give her four of these cakes, after which she makes bottu on their foreheads.

The Bezani now takes the full basket and enters again the little village temple and puts the basket into it and begins to pray thus :—

O Mother, Sonnolipenu! look here upon the full basket: You have now enough food to eat. We made you a sumptuous feast, grant us now good crops, excellent seeds, &c. Then she rises again and all go to the hut outside of the village.

Each one has to bring a living creature along with him. A fowl or even an egg is sufficient. The whole village now offers a goat.

The priests receive the heads of all the slaughtered animals. The remaining flesh, eggs, and everything else that has been brought are put together into a big pot and cooked before the hut. All partake of this cooked meat. Then the priest speaks to the Penu: "Look here, O Mother, we have given you such a sumptuous, luxurious meal and celebrated a solemn observance; now please, graciously bless us all and bestow on us good and copious crops, prosperity and health. If you condescend to grant us our humble request, we assure you that we will prepare a grand feast next year again, otherwise we shall discontinue it for two or three years."

This feast occurs in the month of December, Karti-purnam.

Zākiripenu.

Outside of each Kond village there stands a small temple about 1½ feet square, built entirely of stone slabs. At sunset before the feast, one Tromba, one Dihera, one Sisa and two Bezanis, betake themselves to this place or temple. There they all five engage themselves in cooking some rice and preparing some fowl curry. Then they remove the stone slab which covers the entrance. The Tromba makes a bottu of saffron just in front of the entrance and places the dish containing rice and curry in front.

A cow and a pig are then led to the place, some of this rice and curry is put into their mouths and they are

then slaughtered, their throats being cut with a knife. A certain quantity of their blood is taken and given to Zakiri Linga, after which the flesh of the two animals is cooked up with different kinds of pulse.

The Sisa brings some leaves and places three of them at the left side of the bottu in front of the temple. The Tromba puts rice and curry upon them.

A little further away, about thirty or forty leaves more are placed on the ground and on them cooked meat with rice is placed.

Now the three priests Tromba, Sisa and Dihera begin to pray thus: " O Paramushela, Dada, Dharmu, Kaligu, Pattagu, Besihauna, Chitra, Utra, Asta, Tanassa, Rahuni (names of stars) give us from this day each thy gracious help that we may no more commit sin and that our fields may yield excellent crops bestowing upon us many measures of corn and great heaps of grain and let us not be low and mean.

Before this a man is sent out to collect the "sun-penny" from each house. Every one pays. Arak is purchased with this money. Some quantity of arak is poured over Zakiri and the remainder is drunk by the congregation.

After this is over the dance begins. It is generally restricted to unmarried boys and girls. A line of girls sit on the ground and opposite to them a row of boys. They rise when the dance commences. Each one entwines his left arm round the neck of his companion to the left and his right hand round the waist of the one to his right. First the line of boys moves towards the girls singing, " O girl ! I am a poor boy,

if you marry me what can I give you? I live on wild roots and herbs, bamboos and leaves. What can I give? I have no cloths nor fine dress. You have much money, but I have none. I am a poor boy living in the forests." Then these boys move back and the line of girls advance singing, "O boys, what can I give you? What can I give you, I am a poor girl and cannot give you anything. I live in the forests eating leaves and roots, you are rich, I am poor, I have no cloths nor fine dresses."

This dance continues the whole night or till the participators tire of it.

This Zakiri feast is held in the month of March.

Horupenu (Hill Spirit).

Nobody knows the whereabouts of this hill spirit. Offerings that are tendered in worship are held out to it in the following manner:—

All the inhabitants of a village assemble beside their fields, which adjoin the forest at the time when the crops are ripening.

The Bozanis, the Sisa, and Tromba, and Dihera, fast. Then the Bozanis begin to sing and pray, and after a little while they begin a forward and downward motion of their heads to show that the hill spirit has possessed them. This spirit is supposed to have a head as big as a basket, to be very heavy and to have taken its seat upon the head of the Bezani. She begins now to shiver with cold and announces that the spirit has come.

She now starts a dance which lasts an hour. She receives seven grains of rice and swings her hand up and

down about fifty times, after which she lays down the grains. If one or more of these grains are lost, it shows that the spirit is dissatisfied with the people's offering. A new offering must be made—usually a pig, a sheep, a pigeon, or a fowl.

All these animals are now slain and some of their blood is sprinkled upon the fields as sacrifice to the spirit, after this the slaughtered animals are cooked and enjoyed by all. Some of the people make a vow to offer another fowl or something else in case their fields turn out fruitful and provide a good harvest. When this offering is presented, the meat is distributed to the coolies who help at harvest time.

Bāàlipenu.

In the beginning of February the two Bezanis resort to the nearest river and bring four baskets full of sand, in their belief that this sand is the spirit of the earth, called Ba'ali. In the middle of the village a small bower of green bushes is erected. In the little hut the Bezanis place the four baskets; in these they sow some grains of rice or any other corn.

For seven days the Bezanis pray inside of this hut. On the eighth day the little seedlings are taken out of the basket and are carried by the Bezanis from hous to house and presented to their inhabitants. The villagers fasten them to hairs of their heads, where they remain for some time, after which they are taken out and thrown into the river. All the villagers now offer rice and flowers and proceed singing, whistling and beating the drum to the river. Here the feast begins;

sheep, fowls, etc., are killed and rice is cooked and all partake.

If any villagers are prevented from attending the feast, their relatives or friends reserve half of their own supply for them. No food may be taken home. This feast is held once in the year.

The Jātra Feast.

This feast is held on New Year's Day, which is called Kotha Amavasia and falls in April or May. It is sacred to Durga. Here and there, there are small gardens, about one to twenty villages. Among the trees of these gardens knives are hidden which represents Durga and are named Maridi. A big buffalo is tied before the Maridi.

A whistle by the Tromba is the sign for all people to hasten down with their knives, axes or spears, to attack the beast.

In former times, it was the invariable custom for all villagers to invite their relatives to this feast, and the sons-in-law of these villagers had each to bring a rupee. These rupees were all thrust into the mouth of this poor beast which was forced to swallow them, and as each man was anxious afterwards to recover his money, they used to search for the same while the slaughtered animal was still living. The whole procedure was most inhuman and merciless. As the excitement increases, they sometimes inflict serious injuries on themselves. Some one may lose his arm or finger or even risk his life.

In several places the people tie up the animal to a pole or tree and take its life sooner and not so cruelly as

above stated. Even in insignificant localities a pig or sheep is slain at this Jathra feast.

Omens.

(1) If, when one is on his way to call a doctor and he meets a snake on his way, he will not complete his errand, for, if he does, the belief is that the sick man will certainly die. The snake represents the stick upon which the dead man is to be carried away.

(2) Either parents or young man, before asking for a girl in marriage, will take three times three grains of rice and place them in three different lines, covering each line over with a little earthen pot. The next morning, if one of these lines is broken, the marriage will not take place.

(3) When people go to a village to ask for a girl in marriage, if they meet with any empty waterpots on their way, they say goodbye to such a marriage.

(4) If a hawk happens to rest on a house where there is one sick, death is the anticipated end.

(5) When a man goes out early in the morning, if he meets a childless woman or man, who is not addicted to smoking, he considers it an ill omen.

(6) When a person wishes to borrow some money and hears a parrot cries "chia, chia, chia," instead of "kudisa, kudisa, kudisa," he concludes definitely that he will be unsuccessful in his endeavour.

(7) Nobody should start on Saturday as Chenun will be against him, and similarly none should start on

Monday, as this day is an evil day; the other days are held auspicious.

(8) If people moving from one place to another come across a bear or a monkey, they value the omen as auspicious.

(9) If they dream of an elephant, it is auspicious: if they divulge the dream, it is inauspicious.

(10) If they dream of a tiger or a monkey, famine will light on them.

(11) Tuesdays and Thursdays are reckoned auspicious days for sowing.

(12) Seeds sown on Sundays will bring forth crops fair and in abundance, but they will be destitute of seeds.

(13) Huts must be erected on a field on a Friday. A little story explains the origin of this custom. There was once a man who wished to erect a hut in a field and asked the chenni what day would be auspicious. The priest told him to build it on a Thursday, and accordingly he did so. That very evening a tiger came to his house and asked him why he had built that hut on a Thursday? He told him that he had erected it by the order of the priest. The tiger asked him to go into his village very quietly and find out if anybody was still awake. So, the man obeyed the tiger's orders, went into the village, and returning reported to the tiger that all were asleep except some one in the priest's house. While the man was in the village enquiring, the tiger had gone away but returned by the time the man came back and the tiger gave him a pig for his meal. The man was rejoiced at it, and while all was quiet and still in the village, the tiger went in, caught hold of

the priest and ate him up. Ever since these people build their huts on Friday only.

Obsequies.

If a Kond dies, the customs for all of them are generally the same except those for unweaned infants who are burned without any special ceremony. On all other occasions all the village people take part.

When a member of a village dies the whole village weeps. A small portion of rice with pappu is cooked and a little of it is put into the mouth of the deceased. The remaining rice is laid near his head. Saffron water is thrown over the body and the corpse is conveyed upon a bed or upon some branches to the place of cremation.

All meat of the whole village and even the food then being cooked must be thrown away and the water reserved in pots for home use must be poured out. The bariki of the village only is allowed to receive these eatables.

One man out of each house ought to accompany the corpse to the burial ground bringing with him his axe.

The whole property of the deceased, such as his raiments, his pots, rings, ornaments, and even the money which he possessed, is brought with him. The women who remain at home take all the pots and furniture of their houses to the nearest river and wash them.

When the bearers arrive at the burial ground, each one takes his axe and cuts some dry branches; upon these

branches, heaped together, the corpse is laid. The property of the deceased is placed near his head on the ground; sometimes the money is covered with a little earth. The bearers stand near the corpse and every one of them throws some leaves which he had plucked off a branch, upon the corpse uttering such words as "Your way is now at an end, and your fields turn into forests." Then come two of them, each with a fire brand of straw, one moves from the left to the right and the other from the right to the left, going three times round the corpse. Then one sets fire to the pyre at the head, while the other does so at the feet. After this all retire. "Don't look back," says one to the other, "his ghost will pursue you."

On their way back to the village one of the bearers takes a branch of thorns and lays it over the way and remain standing there. In his hand he holds a little dish made from a leaf and puts into it a small quantity of powdered mango bark which he mixes with water. Each of the bearers, as he passes him, takes a little of this preparation out of the leaf plate, smells it and throws the rest aside.

After this all villagers enter their village again and each one receives a cake, as soon as he enters his house, which his wife has prepared of *pallard* and water; he raises it to his mouth and then throws it behind him. Then he bathes and enters his house. Cooking now begins with fresh drawn water and cleaned pots. Nobody is allowed to do any work on this day. The third day after the death a feast is given to the bearers; a little pig and fowl with rice are cooked. The people who prepare this dinner must be very old men. When all are assembled,

the Bezani comes and begins to move her head up and down, feigning that the spirit of the dead has taken possession of her.

Weeping in a low voice she begins first to talk as if the deceased himself was speaking, as follows: "Do not weep about me; I am all well, I shall be born again through my brother, my uncle or sister with a different name and shall again live amongst you. Do not scold me. Then she makes a sign towards the little orphan children and calls them to herself and lays her hand upon their heads. "Weep not my darlings. Your uncle will arrange a marriage for you and your sister shall take thee into her house. Your brothers must not quarrel with one another, all must behave well. Give my cow to my sister and my fields to my brother, &c." In this way the Bezani makes known the will of the deceased. All relatives or the villagers act strictly according to her advice. After an year this ceremony is renewed on a grander scale and an ox or sheep is slain and the whole village partakes of the sumptuous repast. The Bezani appears again and repeats the wishes of the deceased. When the corpse is burned and everything is reduced to ashes, the ghasi, a very low caste man, goes to the burial place usually on the very day, if he happens to be living near the place, or if he be living at a distance, when he hears about the death of the deceased and he takes everything away that he finds near the corpse. He then proceeds to the village, shows the villagers the rings, chains, etc., of the deceased and asks them to buy them again. The Konds usually comply with his request and pay the full price for them again.

PART II.

SOME CUSTOMS OF THE KUVI KONDS.

SOME OF THE CUSTOMS OF THE KONDS.

Child Birth.

When a child is born, the mother goes with it outside and both take a bath and she rubs saffron over herself and the child's body

Then the relatives bring an handful of stones and put them in a pot of boiling water. Then they also put some flour into it and mix it well. When the soup is ready, the mother has to eat it spitting the stones out. It is the opinion of the people that young mothers should be so strong as to be able to digest even the juice of stones. The next day the mother takes her little child and climbs up the hill to her fields, going behind the workmen picking up grass and stones. If there be no work in the fields, the mother is allowed to stay at home.

On the very first day the child is born, all the hair on its head is shaved, leaving only a tuft of hair on the scalp. When the child is grown up, this is considered a sacred tuft, as it has never been cut off.

The people say that this is the hair that their father and mother have given them, and that their strength lies in this tuft, and that, if they would cut it off, their strength would vanish. It is a shame, some say, for them to cut it off and a blasphemy against their parents. On the eighth day the mother and the midwife are served with a good dinner and with four annas arrack, if convenient.

When the child begins to walk, they kill a pig and have a great feast : on that occasion the name of the child is given. One inhabitant of each house in the village generally takes part in this feast.

Marriage.

When a daughter is grown up the father asks her whether she has betrothed herself to any one. If she says, "yes," the father enquires who it is. On her mentioning the young man's name, he promptly forbids her to marry him, aspersing his moral character severely. On the daughter's refusing to obey her father's behest, he becomes very angry, and cursing his fate orders her to leave his house at once and tells her that he has disowned her. The girl tries to coax her father round, but he is obdurate, gives her a piece of cloth and a sack of grain and she is escorted to the village boundary by some of her village friends, some accompanying her to her father-in-law's house.

When the father-in-law observes the party arriving, he calls to all in the house and tells them of the daughter-in-law's arrival. He at once lights the lamp (even when it is daytime). Now comes the Bezani and goes to the girl and tells her to put her right leg first into the house. She is then taken quietly to the garret. There she puts her hand into a basket of grain, or, if there is none, into a pot of water. Then they both come down, the girl goes into the kitchen and pours the water off the cooked rice.

Then she goes into the house of her new relatives. The people, who have accompanied her, put down their walking sticks and bathe themselves with saffron water. The girl brings the hotwater and puts a piece of saffron near the water; then she rubs the backs of each one.

All visitors bring a copper coin.

After this, the dinner is served. When the dinner is over, the girl takes in her left hand a big country spoon full of water and a basin and goes to each one of the guests and each of them washes his mouth and his hands, she holding the basin before them.

The bridegroom is then made to sit upon the lap of his father-in-law or upon the lap of any elder, when the father-in-law is not alive, and the bride is seated upon the lap of the bridegroom. One of the bystanders now holds the hair of the bridegroom and of the bride together in his hands, and two pots of water are poured upon their hands by another. After this, both receive new cloths.

Then the bridegroom goes into the house and measures four measures of grain and the bride also does the same.

At night both occupy a separate room. For sometime, they keep quiet together, but after a while, the bridegroom cries out that she is refractory.

On this, the father calls all the young unmarried men who are in waiting, and they all rush into the room and assist the bridegroom with most barefaced effrontery to reduce her to subjection.

The next morning, the whole feast is over and the young couple fall into the humdrum groove of every day life.

Marriage for a Boy.

Young men, who are anxious to marry, go to a village where their relatives are. When they reach the place, their motive is at once recognized. All the girls in the village raise a hue and cry announcing their advent.

The parents advise their daughters to go and welcome them. They at once obey and with great joy and delight embrace them and invite them to their houses.

The father at once orders a bed to be brought inside on which these young men and the parents of the girls take their seats. "Why have you come here"? the parents ask. "Your lands are rich and fertile, while ours are poor and sterile; your food consists of rice and meat, whereas we exist only upon roots and herbs. You possess gold and silver ornaments. We have only iron and brass ones."

To this the boys reply. "It is we who are poor while you are rich. It is we who feed on roots and grass, while you subsist on rice and meat. The springs on our lands are parched and dried, while yours contain a plentiful supply of water." While this conversation is proceeding, a good dinner is prepared, of which they partake. Courtesy demands that they accept similar hospitality from all the other houses of the village. The girls follow them striving with fair and soft words to wheedle some small coin from them. Such a present is regarded as a promise of marriage. At night all these young boys and girls assemble in one house. They pass the time in singing and talking to one another. Their intercourse during this time is as unrestrained as is consistent with an observance of chastity though it ranges far beyond the realms of modesty and propriety. Conversation with the

girl runs somewhat as follows. The boy says: "Why will you marry me? What comforts can you expect from me? I am poor; my parents are poor; and my country is poor. You are rich and have gold and silver. If I enter your house it will be disgraced." The girl replies to him in the same strain.

They spend the whole night in talking and singing. The next morning, after taking a bath, the boys leave the village; most of the girls escort them as far as the forest. Then one of them asks the girl of his choice if she would marry him. If she gives him her hand he takes off his ring and puts it on her finger and she fixes her necklace round his neck. This constitutes betrothal which must not be violated. In case of a widower, the custom is different. When a Kond widower wishes to re-marry, he persuades the wife of another man, to marry him. If she does so, a heavy fine of from rupees 10 to 100 is inflicted on them both. After payment of this amount she becomes the lawful wife of the other.

Illness.

When a Kond is taken ill, the Bezani comes to his house and begins to pray, to sing and soon works herself into the hysterical state which is recognized as being possessed by a spirit. She begins to swing her head to and fro from right to left, and then declares that the sick man had promised to Peramushesha before he was born that he would present him with an umbrella or in default, would present himself before him.

All the people who hear this, get very frightened and promise at once to bring the umbrella, and without delay

they make preparations for a feast. An umbrella is prepared, consisting of red, black, white and yellow threads, fixed round a little bamboo stick, and a small bower is also erected one and half foot in circumference into which a small mud idol is placed.

This little idol represents the sick man who delivers the umbrella to God. After this, fowls or a sheep are slain and the feast takes place. The same course is adopted when cholera, small-pox, and other contagious diseases appear.

The only difference on these occasions is, while they present an umbrella in the former, they offer two swords or a gun made of wood in the latter.

When those diseases start, many persons, but more especially young children, carry small bundles of firewood, while others carry little bamboo dishes containing rice and curry. A small bandy is constructed and taken to each infected house, when the owners thoroughly and carefully sweep their floors and remove the sweepings into this little cart. All the villagers follow it, while some of them drag it to a place outside the village. They throw this bandy, the firewood and dishes of curry and rice into a heap and slay several fowls there.

The heads of the fowls are consigned to the heap. The spirit is then besought to quit the village without causing any further harm or injury to the inhabitants.

The flesh of the fowls is taken home and is used by each family in the preparation of its next meal.

Another course of procedure for a poor sick man is as follows. The Bezani takes seven grains of rice in her

hand and begins to swing her hand up and down about fifty times : after this she shows the grain to the people around her and ask them to count. If the full number of grains remains in her hand, she assures the by-standers that the sick man will be restored to health in a short time, and demands a piece of cloth and a fowl or a sheep from them.

If, however, one or more grains are lost, the patient's conditions pronounced to be dangerous, and therefore greater offering must be made to propitiate the evil spirits.

Erecting a New Village.

The Konds are nomadic in their habits. They do not like to remain long in one place. The unsatisfactory condition of the land usually necessitates their leaving it and settling down in some new places. Living as they do between the forests that cover the hills, each man selects a spot after testing the soil, he then clears it and burns up the clearings.

Before the rains set in on the first day of June each cultivator invites the whole village to help him in preparing the land. Each villager renders him help for one day receiving his food for the day from his employer and ¼ an anna as his day's pay. The work commences at about 9 in the morning.

Some engage themselves in cooking raggy or some grain in big pots for all the labourers.

They all sit together at about 2 o'clock and partake of this meal that has been prepared. When the hills decrease in their fertility, some or perhaps all the villagers abandon the place and seek for another site. They like to select old forests, with big trees, as these are recognized to be the most fertile. They do not generally remain at the same place for more than five or six years. Those Konds however who are fortunate enough to possess nice fields on the plains may continue for a longer period if not for always. No other tribe is by nature so indolent and idle. If they do a good day's work, it is only under strict supervision. They could spend their lives very happily on their quiet beautiful hills, but they are all slaves to their different money lenders on the plains. After the cultivation of their fields has been attended to, they loll about in their houses or on their filthy verandahs playing with their babies.

When they have nothing to appease their hunger, a money-lender is ever ready to accommodate them with money.

As the hills abound in very many valuable products, the Konds might clear off their debts very easily, but, as they are very stupid and frightened of the Telugus, they can never be liberated and are never able to extricate themselves when they have once fallen into the money lender's hands. For instance, a ryot borrows a rupee from a certain money lender and promises to repay it at harvest time, which is five or six months off. During this intervening period the money lender calls upon him each month and the debtor is debited with the cost of his creditor's food for that day. If he cannot clear the debt by the appointed date, he is induced to borrow still more.

At harvest time the creditor visits the fields of his debtors and measures the grain, which he purchases at a very low price, using perhaps false measures. The interest is then calculated both on the money actually borrowed as well as on the amount debited as representing the cost of the creditor's food during his monthly visits. The poor ryot (Kond) by hard begging prevails on the creditor to supply him with grain for the coming year's sowing, and the creditor magnanimously consents to receive only the principal of the debt leaving the interest on it to be paid up next harvest time on the understanding that interest is chargeable thereon at the rate of one anna per mensem on each rupee. It is easy to understand that under these conditions, not only is the debt never cleared, but also increases steadily till the creditor is in a position to claim all that the poor debtor possesses. The debtor ultimately becomes the creditor's slave.

He becomes so afraid of offending his creditor that he presents him with fowls and vegetables. This state of things continues till unable any longer to bear the creditor's oppression, he absconds bidding a sad farewell to his weeping wife and children. The interest on his debt to the sahoocar in course of time assumes alarming proportions, but there is no chance of its ever being recovered. In course of time it is written off as a bad debt.

When a Kond wishes to select another locality, he chooses what appears to be a place likely to meet his requirements.

He takes nine grains of rice and lays them in three lines on the selected spot, covering them with a small earthen dish plastered over with cowdung and

earth. The first three grains are for the spirit of the soil, the second line for Paramashesa and the third line for himself.

On the following day if one of these three lines is deflected, which may easily have been done by ants, he understands thereby that the objection to his settling down there is attributable to the spirit of the soil, Paramashesa or his own family. If the Kond is really anxious to remain in this place, he applies this test several times until it is successful. The site having been decided, the Dihora or the astrologer ascertains by the stars which will be an auspicious day, and on that day a pillar of the future house is raised and its upper portion is painted with saffron. He binds to it a tuft of grass and worshipping it entreats the blessings and help of Paramashesa and the spirits of the earth on his new house.

The Dihora is again asked to state when the house is to be built and to be completed. After it has been constructed, some unleavened raggy is cooked and placed upon a leaf before each pillar of the house. The owner worships the pillars again; then, the children come and eat this raggy, after which the first cooking takes place inside.

Jurisdiction.

If any person is charged with a heinous crime, the complainant reports the case to the village headman who summons the Tromba, Sisa, Dihera, the Bariki and the Salana, all of whom constitute the tribunal or Court of Justice.

If the accused confesses his crime a fine is inflicted with which they purchase either a cow or an ox and a certain quantity of arrack. A good dinner is prepared and the whole village enjoys it.

If the accused denies the charge, the tribunal exacts from him an oath in the undermentioned manner. A pot is filled with cowdung and water and is put over the fire and a small coin is slipped into the pot when its contents are boiling. The accused then stands before the pot and repeats these words, "I worship thee, O Paramashesa, and the Dati," then touching the earth with his hands, he says, "I have committed no fault; thou art my witness. If I really am guilty, may the skin of my hand be burnt." With these words, he plunges his hand into the boiling cowdung and takes out the coin, placing it on the ground.

Now-a-days if any innocent persons venture to stand this test and dare to immerse their hands in boiling water, they of course suffer. It is, however, useless to argue that this custom is cruel, as the Konds have implicit faith in it as being an infallible truth finder.

Village Government.

Each village has one headman whose name is Hauta or as others call him Naidu. All quarrels and disputes are laid before him. Even domestic affairs are brought to his notice as he is regarded as the father of all the villagers. If there be a quarrel in a family, the husband goes to his Hauta and gives him all particulars. The Hauta sends for complainant's wife, and after admonishing her fines her a rupee. The husband of

course has to sustain this loss. Should another man recognize the absurdity of the complainant having to pay the defendant's debt, the complainant replies, "Why should not I pay? Do you think that our village approve of such a quarrel?" There comes another woman who is ill-treated by her husband and complains against him. No sooner does the husband hear of this, then he buys a bottle of arrack and calls on the Hauta at once with it under his arm, feeling pretty certain that he has anticipated his sentence. When a son disobeys his father, at first the father exercises his own authority, but if the boy becomes persistently disobedient, the father goes to the Bariki of the village and telling him of his sorrow and vexation gives him one or two annas and asks him to report the matter to the Hauta. The Hauta then sends for the boy and remonstrates with him warning him not to be disobedient any more, and, after giving him any amount of good advice, orders him to bring him about four annas worth of arrack. The boy very much dejected and covered with shame returns to his father and asks him why he told the Hauta about his misconduct. He then asks the father for four annas to buy the arrack. The father refuses to give it to him, whereupon the boy tells him that he must in that case dispose of his axe or knife to realize the required amount. At last the father pays the money. The boy goes to the next shop and bringing the arrack in a gourd, appears again before the Hauta, who by now has been joined by the Tromba, Sisa and Dihera.

The Hauta receives the pumpkin with arrack in his hand and says, "From this day may you be obedient to and happy with your father, following whatever

directions he gives you," at each word he dips his fingers into the arrack and sprinkles some drops over him The others act in the same manner. At last they all consume it and admonish the boy to be good and behave well in future, or they will be compelled to fine him an ox. If any theft, or crime, such as robbery, occurs in the village and the sufferer makes his loss known, he is fined up to four rupees if he cannot prove who committed the crime. On this account, it has become a custom among the Konds not to divulge any loss that any of them suffers. "Don't let it be known. The rest will also be taken" is a proverb among the Konds.

Murder of Babies.

It was a very general custom among the Konds to kill their little babies when they suspected that any harm might befall their community from the birth of the infant.

On the birth of the child, its father goes direct to the Dihera and asks him to cast its horoscope. The Dihera requests to know the correct hour of its birth. With eyes cast down, as if he were absorbed in deep contemplation, and then looking up to the sky, as if he were contemplating the movements of the stars, he begins his utterance "A danger awaits the father from a tiger in a forest, a snake may bite its mother, his sister may fall from a hill." On hearing this, the poor father returns home, and in great sorrow and vexation of spirit, takes the child, while the mother and others are crying bitterly, digs a pit and, laying the child in it wrapped in a white cloth, covers it with earth.

This was the invariable custom among the Konds, till recently. Several people still living have witnessed this inhuman custom with their own eyes. It is the opinion of many that this cruel custom is still prevalent in some remote villages among the hills, notwithstanding the vigilance of the British Government.

Kuvi Songs

The Kuvi loves songs at all times, and at all places; it may be at bright midday or in the, dark of the night, outside on their fields sitting upon some broken tree or in their houses. The common instruments are especially two, a self-made fiddle and bow and a self-made flute. Besides these they have different kinds of drums, but those are mostly only used on their festival days, whilst the fiddle and especially the flute may be heard daily near these villages.

The Kuvi Kond has a number of different tunes but all suffer under the same defect, which is shortness. There is really only one line of tune for each hymn. This will be repeated ten to fifty times, when the head singer suddenly changes the tune and begins with another one, in which all accord unanimously. As far as the shortness of tunes is concerned, the Kuvi lyrics will find it rather a hard task to force its way into more civilised or into Christian assemblies.

Anyhow I have tried to give to my Kuvi Christians some hymns in their own language and with their own melodies.